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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR WOLFF MEETS WITH UNIFIL COMMANDER  
GRAZIANO

Classified By: Ambassador Susan Rice for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Ambassador Wolff met with General Claudio Graziano, the Force Commander of UNIFIL, and discussed UNIFIL's operations, elections in Lebanon, and Israel's occupation of northern Ghajar. Graziano said the security situation in Lebanon will remain critical during the run-up to the Lebanese elections on June 7, a time when parties will politicize the work of UNIFIL for political gain. According to Graziano, Palestinian terrorists operating in Lebanon are conducting rocket attacks against Israel with the intent on encouraging Hizballah to enter and expand the conflict. Regarding Israel's occupation of northern Ghajar, Graziano asked the USG to pressure Israel outside of the Security Council to withdraw from northern Ghajar, which serves as a rallying call for Hizballah and other extremists. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Ambassador Wolff on February 26 met with General Claudio Graziano, the Force Commander of UNIFIL, during Graziano's visit to New York for a meeting of the UN's Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. Graziano said the security situation in Lebanon now until the parliamentary elections on June 7 will remain critical as parties can use this time to politicize the work of UNIFIL for political gain. He said, for instance, that when UNIFIL expands the deployment of its peacekeepers to search for rockets, the civilian population protests and provides Hizballah with a political win. Moreover, Hizballah has the ability to use its media outreach to further antagonize the population against UNIFIL.

¶3. (S) He said the conflict in Gaza jeopardized the relatively stable security situation in UNIFIL's area of operations and precipitated the firing of rockets from Lebanese territory into Israel. Graziano said Israeli military intelligence informed him that one of the Lebanon-based rocket attacks was by Hizballah, but not the others, though he admitted they probably were fired with Hizballah's approval. He said the rocket firing on February 21 was the most worrisome because it was likely perpetrated by a Palestinian group with support from Al Qaeda. He noted further that some rockets are produced in Palestinian camps, some of which harbor Salafist elements, and which are off limits to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). Security around the Rashidiyya camp is relatively good with the LAF inspecting cars, but other camps are not as well scrutinized for weapons, according to Graziano. (Comment: The Rashidiyya camp is located approximately five miles from Tyre. End comment.) He said the rocket attack on January 14 was deliberately launched near a Lebanese school during operating hours to draw Hizballah into the conflict because of the likelihood of an Israeli retaliatory strike.

¶4. (C) Graziano said El Salvador has committed new troops to UNIFIL and South Korea is considering increasing its number of peacekeepers. With regard to the LAF, Graziano said its capabilities have lapsed. He said, however, that the new LAF Director of Operations has a working relationship with the

Israeli Defense Force (IDF), and on one occasion the Director asked the IDF for intelligence on the location of rockets so the LAF could shell the area.

15. (C) Regarding the Israeli occupation of northern Ghajar, Graziano reiterated that UNSCR 1701 requires the unconditional withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon. He said that despite the IDF's eagerness to pull out of Ghajar, the political leaders want to connect northern Ghajar to other issues, which is inappropriate and delays resolution of other questions. Graziano requested that the USG encourage other countries to support its operations, and that the USG pressure Israel to withdraw from northern Ghajar. He said Israel's continued occupation of northern Ghajar gives Hizballah and other extremist groups a rallying call for their supporters.  
Rice